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DSG Begins Work Evaluating ‘Not In Our Town’ Hate Crime Prevention Model

BETHESDA, MD.—Development Services Group, Inc. (DSG), with funding from the National Institute of Justice, is conducting a mixed-methods evaluability study of the Not In Our Town Hate and Bias Teams (HBAT) Model, a program to combat hate. This U.S. Department of Justice–funded initiative was implemented in Pittsburgh, Pa., after the killing of 11 Jewish worshipers and the injuring of many others, at the Tree of Life Synagogue in that city. The three-year grant officially kicked off Jan. 1.

The primary objectives of the research are to 1) develop a generalized HBAT model, 2) validate the generalized model, 3) examine the localized application of the model, and 4) develop a preliminary evaluation plan to assess the generalized model’s effectiveness. The project is part of a larger effort to evaluate the HBAT model.

Not In Our Town (or NIOT) was founded in 1988, in Oakland, Calif., with the mission to “to stop hate, address bullying, and build safe, inclusive communities for all.”

How Hate Crimes Differ From Other Criminal Activity

Hate crimes (also known as bias crimes) are complex, significantly on the rise, and often vastly underreported.

Multiple data sources indicate that the number of hate crimes in the United States continues to rise every year. At the national level, according to the most recent data available through the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Supplemental Hate Crime Statistics, in 2021 there were 10,840 incidents and 12,411 related offenses classified as being motivated by bias against race/ethnicity/ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, or gender identity. These figures represent a 31 percent increase in incidents and an 11 percent increase in related offenses between 2020 and 2021.

Hate crimes are distinct from other crimes because each hate crime affects not only the immediate victim but also other members of the victim’s demographic group. When a person is attacked because of bias against the victim’s perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability, the

effect can be chilling to others who identify by that characteristic. The mind often jumps to

It could happen to me. Out of nowhere. By a stranger.

“A great deal of research has been conducted on general hate crime topics such as prevalence, causes, consequences, and related issues,” explained Dr. Stephen Gies, DSG’s director of research and evaluation, who is principal investigator on the study. “But specific research examining hate crime prevention or interventions—especially those at the community level—is lacking. The purpose of our study is to address this gap and contribute to the growing body of literature on hate crimes by conducting a preliminary evaluation of a community-level prevention model that jurisdictions across the country can potentially implement in their efforts to prevent— or reduce—hate crimes.”

Four Tasks, Three Years, Three Phases

DSG will carry out the study in three phases over three years, with two tasks in each of the first two phases.

Task 1 of the first phase is using an iterative, consensus-building process to develop a generalized program logic model and implementation guide for the NIOT-HBAT process. The model and guide will describe a general process and mechanism of change that can serve as a basis for developing general evaluation milestones and metrics.

Task 2 will convene an advisory group of subject-matter experts, who will provide feedback and counsel on the draft NIOT-HBAT program logic model and implementation guide, emphasizing how to measure the model’s efficacy.

Task 3, part of phase 2, will draw on the tradition of participatory research that fuses systematic inquiry with the direct collaboration of those affected most by obtaining candid, real-world knowledge from local implementation sites regarding the NIOT-HBAT program model. In other words, the task will engage those who represent the interests of the people and communities who are the focus of the research. Gies and his co-principal investigator, Dr. Mark Edberg of George Washington University, anticipate at least two case study sites (Pittsburgh and the Bloomington–Normal metropolitan area of Illinois) to represent implementation at different stages of the process.

Task 4 will develop a preliminary research plan in conjunction with NIOT staff. The evaluation plan will first make recommendations to remedy any critical deficiencies identified through the evaluability assessment (for example, sufficient power, existing data sources, causal attribution). Second, it will provide a detailed plan to conduct both an outcome and process evaluation.

Phase 3 of the project will be the evaluation itself.